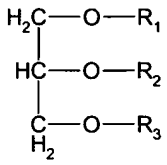
CLAIMS:

1. A composition comprising

i) a thermoplastic polymer

ii) a compound having the formula



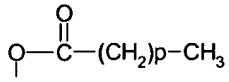
wherein R_1, R_2 and R_3 are independently selected from an acyl group or a hydrogen atom,

wherein at least one of R_1, R_2 and R_3 is an acyl group (a short acyl group) having from 2 to 6 carbon atoms

wherein at least one of R_1, R_2 and R_3 is a branched chain acyl group (a long acyl group) consisting of a saturated chain having 10 to 20 carbon atoms and a hydrophilic branch group.

2. A composition according to claim 1 wherein the hydrophilic branch group is an acyl group or a derivative thereof.

3. A composition according to claim 2 wherein the hydrophilic branch group is a group of the formula



wherein p is from 0 to 4.

4. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein two of R_1, R_2 and R_3 are the short acyl groups and wherein the other of R_1, R_2 and R_3 is a long acyl group.

5. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the chain of the long acyl group consists of a chain having 14 to 20 carbon atoms.

6. A composition according to claim 5 wherein the chain of the long acyl group consists of a

chain having 16 to 20 carbon atoms.

7. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the short acyl group is an acyl group having from 2 to 5 carbon atoms.

8. A composition according to claim 7 wherein the short acyl group is an acyl group having 2 carbon atoms.

9. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the short acyl group is present in an amount, on average, of no greater than 2 moles per mole of glycerol and esters thereof.

10. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the long acyl group is present in an amount, on average, of at least 0.4 moles, preferably from 0.9 to 2 moles, more preferably from 0.9 to 1 moles per mole of glycerol and esters thereof.

11. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the total amount of the acyl groups is, on average, 2.7 to 3.0 moles per mole of glycerol and esters thereof.

12. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the compound is an acetylated interesterification product of glycerol and an oil selected from castor oil, including hardened castor oil, unhardened castor oil and mixtures thereof.

13. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the thermoplastic polymer is or comprises a vinyl chloride polymer or a vinyl chloride copolymer selected from vinyl chloride/vinyl acetate copolymer, vinyl chloride/vinylidene chloride copolymer, vinyl chloride/ethylene copolymer and a copolymer prepared by grafting vinyl chloride onto ethylene/vinyl acetate copolymer, and mixtures thereof.

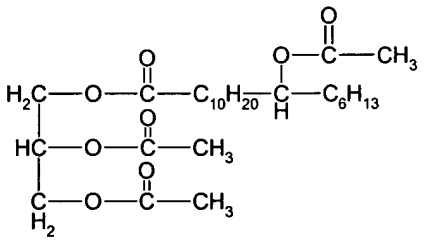
14. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the thermoplastic

polymer is or comprises a polymer blend of a thermoplastic polymer and a second polymer.

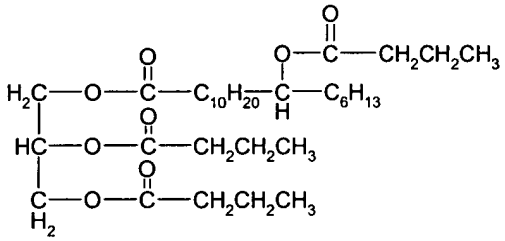
15. A composition according to claim 14, wherein the second polymer is a methacryl polymer or an acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene polymer.

16. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the composition comprises the compound in an amount of 1 to 100 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of the thermoplastic polymer.

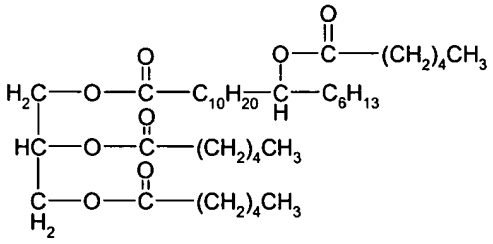
17. A composition according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the compound has the formula



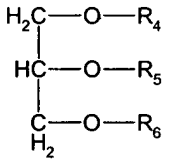
18. A composition according to any one of claims 1 to 16 wherein the compound has the formula



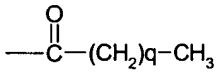
19. A composition according to any one of claims 1 to 16 wherein the compound has the formula



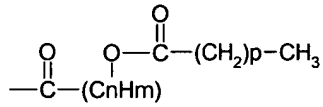
20. A compound of the formula



wherein two of R_4, R_5, and R_6 are of the formula



wherein for each of the two of R_4, R_5, and R_6 q is independently selected from 0 to 3 and the other of R_4, R_5, and R_6 is a branched group of the formula



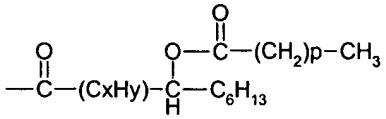
wherein n is from 10 to 20 and m is 2n, and wherein p is from 0 to 4, and wherein one of p and q is greater than 0.

21. A compound according to claim 20 wherein p is from 0 to 3.

22. A compound according to claim 20 or 21 wherein q is 0.

23. A compound according to claim 20, 21 or 22 wherein n is from 16 to 20, preferably from 16 to 18, more preferably 17.

24. A compound according to any one of claims 20 to 23 wherein the branched group is a group of the formula



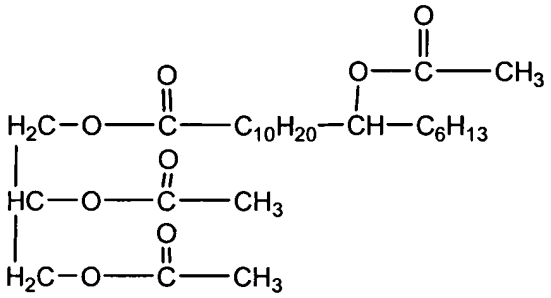
wherein x is from 7 to 10 and y is 2x, and wherein p is from 0 to 4.

25. A compound according to claim 24 wherein p is from 0 to 3.

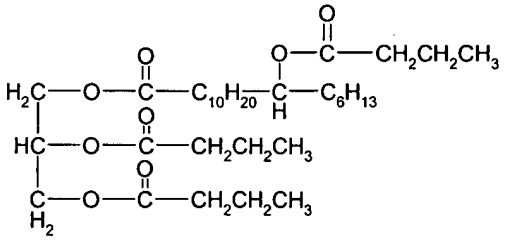
26. A compound according to claim 24 or 25 wherein p is 0.

27. A compound according to claim 24, 25 or 26 wherein x is 10.

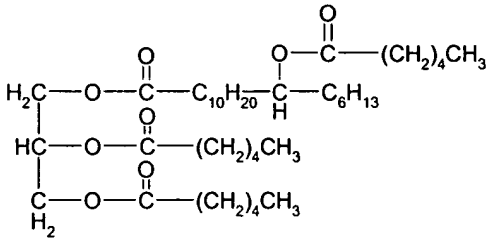
28. A compound of the formula



29. A compound of the formula

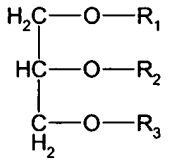


30. A compound of the formula

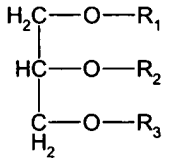


31. A composition comprising a compound as defined in any one of claims 20 to 30 and a thermoplastic polymer.

32. A process for the preparation of a compound having the formula



wherein R_1, R_2 and R_3 are independently selected from an acyl group or a hydrogen atom, wherein at least one of R_1, R_2 and R_3 is an acyl group (a short acyl group) having from 2 to 6 carbon atoms; wherein at least one of R_1, R_2 and R_3 is a branched chain acyl group (a long acyl group) consisting of a chain having 10 to 20 carbon atoms and a hydrophilic branch group;
the process comprising the steps of:
(i) interesterification between glycerol and triglyceride compound having the formula



wherein each of R_1, R_2 and R_3 is a fatty acid group consisting of a chain having 10 to 20 carbon atoms, to provide a composition comprising glycerol, monoglyceride, diglyceride and/or triglyceride;
(ii) optionally isolating the monoglyceride and/or diglyceride from the composition;
(iii) acylating the monoglyceride and/or diglyceride or the composition containing the same.

33. A process according to claim 36 wherein the compound is a compound as defined in any one of claims 20 to 34.

34. A composition according to claim 1 as substantially hereinbefore described.

35. A compound according to claim 20 as substantially hereinbefore described.

36. A process according to claim 32 as substantially hereinbefore described.